United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1535
6 December 1993

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- General Assembly, in resolution adopted without a vote, affirms its support for President Aristide of Haiti, and condemns attempt to unlawfully replace him; says Governors Island Agreement is only valid framework for resolving Haitian crisis.

- Secretary-General's Special Representative in El Salvador requests investigation into recent killings of Army lieutenant and two members of National Police; seeks investigation and prosecution of illegal armed groups.

- General Assembly would recommend that United Nations, to consolidate democracy, provide electoral assistance to requesting States before and after elections, by terms of draft resolution approved by Third Committee.

- Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development concludes third meeting; deliberations focused on conditions conducive to long-term development in Africa, security, regional integration and cooperation.

- United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services signs cooperation agreement with International Chamber of Commerce to enhance private sector's role in developing countries.

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The General Assembly today affirmed its support for the constitutional President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and for his Prime Minister, and strongly condemned the attempt to unlawfully replace him. In a resolution adopted without a vote, the Assembly condemned the use of violence and military coercion and the violation of human rights in Haiti. It declared unacceptable any entity arising from the unlawful situation in the country and demanded the return of President Aristide, as well as full implementation of the Haitian Constitution.

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By the resolution, the Assembly also supported the process of political dialogue carried out under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). It asserted that the Governors Island Agreement remained the only valid framework for resolving the crisis in Haiti, and asked the Secretary-General to bring back the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH) as soon as possible and to pursue efforts to deploy the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), in accordance with the Agreement. The Assembly expressed concern for the Haitian people and reasserted that the Haitian military authorities were fully responsible for the suffering resulting directly from their disrespect for the Haitian Constitution.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative in El Salvador, Augusto Ramirez-Ocampo has requested that an investigation be conducted into the recent assassinations of a lieutenant in the country's Armed Forces and two members of the National Police. In a statement issued in San Salvador on Friday, he asked that the investigations be conducted with the same rigour as had been applied to other recent crimes that had so troubled the national and international community.

Mr. Ramirez-Ocampo, who is Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), announced that he had instructed ONUSAL Police and Human Rights Division teams to assist in the investigations, stressing "the urgent and absolute need to regain calm". He said he hoped that a Joint Group would be formed promptly to investigate whether illegal armed groups with political intentions existed, and, if such groups were found, to prosecute them.

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The General Assembly would recommend that the United Nations, in order to consolidate democracy, provide electoral assistance to requesting States before and after elections, by the terms of a draft resolution approved in the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) this morning. The Organization would be requested to ensure that there was adequate time to carry out an electoral assistance mission and that conditions existed for a free and fair election. The assistance provided by the United Nations would also include recommending programmes which might contribute to the consolidation of the democratization process.

The draft was approved following three recorded votes with five countries voting against two of its provisions (Cuba, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar and Iraq) and, respectively, 13 and 14 abstaining. The draft as a whole, which deals with enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections, was approved by a vote of 138 in favour to 1 against (Cuba), with 15 abstentions.

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The Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development, which was appointed by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali one year ago, concluded its third meeting at Headquarters at the end of last week. The Panel's deliberations focused on conditions conducive to long-term development in Africa, security and African development, and regional integration and cooperation. The Panel also discussed the issue of diversification of African economies and the feasibility of a diversification fund.

In his opening statement, the Secretary-General recalled that the Panel was his "think tank" on African development. Introducing the topics on the agenda, he stressed that peace, stability and security were prerequisites for development, citing the examples of Somalia, Angola and Liberia. He stated that "peace cannot long be preserved where economic injustice is systematically perpetuated or where the opportunity is continually denied", and that "peace will be fragile if political institutions are not accountable, if political participation is not widespread, or if human rights are not respected".

The Panel recognized that peace and security were fundamental preconditions for development and that they required the involvement of the African people and leadership. The Panel also made specific recommendations regarding United Nations assistance to regional entities in conflict management and conflict resolution, as well as the Organization's role in the democratization of Africa. The Panel also stressed the role of United Nations field representatives in fostering preventive diplomacy.

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The United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services has signed a cooperation agreement with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to enhance the private sector's role in developing countries and in countries whose economies are in transition. The agreement provides, among other things, for exchanges of information and expertise, and for collaborative efforts to provide the skills needed for the development of entrepreneurship.

The Department and the ICC also agreed to work together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other multilateral and regional financial institutions to advance their common interest in promoting entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

The agreement was signed on Friday by Ji Chaozhu, Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Service, and Jean Charles Rouher, Secretary-General of the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris.

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7 December 1993

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly launches International Year of Family, with theme: "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world"; Secretary-General says he hopes Year will serve as positive intitiative for human dignity and human rights.

+ Prime Minister of Haiti announces new initiative to solve Haitian crisis within framework of Governors Island Agreement; aims to convene national conference with representatives from all sectors of society; Secretary-General pledges continued United Nations support.

+ Secretary-General describes death of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire today as loss of African founding father; says President's goals of freedom and independence and his wise guidance remain.

+ Seventy States meet in Cartagena, Colombia, with view to restructuring and refinancing Global Environment Facility; target of $2 billion set for global environmental activities, including implementation of UNCED agreements, in next three years.

+ United Kingdom, in letter to Secretary-General, rejects allegation by Bosnia and Herzegovina that it refused to prevent genocide against Bosnian people; says it will vigorously defend itself against any proceedings instituted in International Court of Justice.

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The General Assembly launched the International Year of the Family (1994) at its plenary meeting this morning. Proclaimed by the Assembly in December 1989, the Year is intended as an oppportunity to increase awareness of the importance of family issues such as single parenthood, child-raising and the ageing of populations. The Year's theme is "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world".

In his opening statement this morning, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stressed that support for the family must not come at the expense of each person's human rights. He hoped that the Year would lead to action on behalf of the family, and also serve as a positive intitiative for

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human dignity and human rights. "In the change and confusion of the modern world, families are a source of stability and promise. Families can help to bridge ethnic and political divisions. They can enhance economic potential They can promote social welfare and social responsibility," he said.

In his address, General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) quoted the idea that "if we want better people to make a better world, we should begin where people are made -- in the family". However, the institution of the family was under constant siege, from recession, unemployment, changing values, moral degradation and such evils as crime, drugs, disease and violence. "For these reasons, Governments would be best advised," he said, "to formulate appropriate policies to enable families to adapt to the demands of change and, thus, remain as the bedrock of our civilization."

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Prime Minister Robert Malval of Haiti today announced a new initiative aimed at solving the crisis in that country within the framework of the Governors Island Agreement. The initiative would take the form of a national conference which would bring together all sectors in Haiti to discuss implementation of the Agreement and the mid- and long-term problems facing the country. Mr. Malval told correspondents at Headquarters that he had had a very constructive meeting with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali this morning, and that the Secretary-General and the Security Council would strongly support the initiative.

"We want to rekindle hope," Mr. Malval said. so that the people of Haiti did not despair and take to the seas to the United States or to other islands in the Carribbean. To that end, the initiative would deal with Haiti's political, economic, moral and human rights problems. The return of order in Haiti required the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power, he stressed. However, President Aristide's return alone would not solve the country's problems. The main criterion for participation in the conference would be acceptance of the Governors Island Agreement as the basis for dialogue. Mr. Malval added that he would leave today for Rome in order to ask the Vatican to lend its moral support to the iniative.

A United Nations spokesman later said that the Secretary-General hoped that the initiative would give new impetus to the search for a solution to the Haitian crisis within the context of the Governors Island Agreement. The Secretary-General had pledged that he would continue to work to that end with the constitutional Government of Haiti, in collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS).

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The death of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire today was described by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali as the loss of a founding father of the African continent. Expressing his personal sense of bereavement, he said the President had been a true friend who gave himself unstintingly to the cause of peace and development. His towering presence was gone, but the goals of freedom and independence which he had upheld would remain.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali said the example of President Houphouet-Boigny's life and his wisdom would continue to be provide guidance. He wanted his condolences to the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire to be a message of hope, in that the President would live on in people's adherence to his ideals.

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A restructured and financially replenished Global Environment Facility (GEF) is expected to emerge from a meeting of more than 70 Governments being held this week in Cartagena, Colombia. That would be the first major step towards implementing agreements reached at last year's United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The GEF emerged from UNCED as the principal funding mechanism for global environmental activities, particularly in relation to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The GEF was originally launched as a three-year pilot programme in 1991, and its current phase will end in mid-1994. The GEF has already committed more than $730 million to 113 projects aimed at helping developing countries deal with the threat to the global environment from climate change, the loss of biodiversity, pollution of international waters and depletion of the ozone layer. Donor countries have already agreed on a target of $2 billion for GEF II, representing a considerable increase in resources available over the next three years. If issues related to the governance of the GEF are resolved, donors are expected to announce pledges in Cartagena.

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The United Kingdom has rejected allegations by Bosnia and Herzegovina that it failed in its affirmative obligation and refused to prevent genocide against the Bosnian people. In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 6 December, the United Kingdom said that if Bosnia and Herzegovina instituted legal proceedings against it before the International Court of Justice, it would vigorously defend itself.

In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 24 November, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its intention to institute such procedings, saying that the United Kingdom had violated the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and other sources of general international law set forth in the World Court's Statute.

Bosnia and Herzegovina said that it would also serve notice on the more than 100 Contracting Parties to the Genocide Convention that "each and every one of them has a solemn legal and moral obligation 'to prevent' the commission of genocide in and against the People and State of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina". The United Kingdom, it went on to say, had promoted options, "ostensibly as solutions to the aggression against the Republic", that were inconsistent with the terms of the 1965 treaty on racial discrimination.

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Joint Group to investigate politically-motivated illegal armed groups in El Salvador established today; to report to Salvadoran President and Secretary-General at end of six-month mandate.

+ Special Committee against Apartheid welcomes inaugural meeting yesterday of South Africa's Transitional Executive Council, which also marks lifting of oil embargo against country.

+ Security Council expresses support for Secretary-General's proposal that Western Sahara referendum be held no later than mid-1994; urges Moroccan Government and POLISARIO to cooperate with United Nations efforts to settle situation in area.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today announced the establishment of a Joint Group to investigate politically motivated illegal armed groups in El Salvador. The Group will have a six-month mandate, at the end of which it will report to the President of El Salvador and the Secretary-General, presenting its conclusions and recommendations and information received from a technical team of Salvadoran and foreign investigators.

The Joint Group, which will be autonomous, impartial and apolitical, will have its own institutional identity and will assist the Government of El Salvador in investigating illegal armed groups, as recommended by the Commission on the Truth. The investigation will cover the activities of such groups from 16 January 1992, the date on which the El Salvador Peace Accords were signed.

The Joint Group is made up of four Salvadorian lawyers: two independent Government representatives nominated by the President of El Salvador, José Leandro Echeverría and Juan Jerónimo Castillo; the National Counsel for the Defence of Human Rights, Mauricio Molina Fonseca; and the Director of the Division of Human Rights of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), Diego García-Sayán.

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The Special Committee against Apartheid has welcomed the inaugural meeting in Cape Town yesterday of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC). The Council will prepare South Africa for its first free and fair elections, and assist the Government until next April, when the elections are to be held. The Special Committee Chairman said in a statement that the inauguration of the TEC yesterday also meant the lifting of the oil embargo against South Africa, as decided by the General Assembly in resolution 48/1 adopted by consensus on 8 October.

The Special Committee commended continued efforts to negotiate with parties that had so far decided not to take part in the Council and the upcoming elections. It was vital, the Committee said, that the elections reflect the hopes and aspirations of all South Africans. The Committee urged the international community to continue its moral and material assistance to South Africans to help them achieve a non-racial democracy.

Meanwhile, the Intergovernmental Group to Monitor the Supply and Shipping of Oil and Petroleum Products to South Africa has recommended that its mandate be terminated when the General Assembly adopts its report. The Group noted in the report that the objectives of the oil embargo against South Africa had in many respects been achieved. It made its recommendation in view of the Assembly's resolution to lift the embargo when the TEC became operational, and in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the South African liberation movements.

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The Security Council has expressed its support for the Secretary-General's proposal that the referendum in Western Sahara be held no later than mid-1994. While regretting that the previous timetable, by which the referendum would have been held by the end of this year, could not be maintained, the Council fully subscribed to the Secretary-General's observations in that regard. In a letter from its President to the Secretary-General dated 6 December, the Council welcomed the progress already achieved in narrowing the differences between the views of the Moroccan Government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO).

The Council said that the compromise proposal outlined in the Secretary-General's latest report on the issue was a sound framework for determinining potential participation in the referendum, and expressed support for his determination to move ahead with voter registration and identification. The Council urged both parties to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in their efforts to achieve a speedy settlement of the situation in Western Sahara.

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